MARVEL
PG 49 147

JENKINS

BUCKINGHAM

FAUCHER

PETER PARKER™ SPIDER-MAN®

BUCKY
+WAYNE
delgado

Previously in Peter Parker...

A fateful showdown between Spider-Man and his longtime nemesis, the Green Goblin, has left Peter Parker's friend Flash Thompson in a coma.

The prognosis offers a bleak picture: Flash's brain has been badly scarred-- he appears to have suffered irreparable brain damage.

Spider-Man cannot help but blame himself.

While Spider-Man's thoughts are occupied with Flash's predicament, a seemingly unrelated incident occurs across town in the supposedly impenetrable vaults of a sinister viral research company named AGK, Inc.

A priceless diamond is stolen from under the noses of the security employees there, and a single piece of evidence is found... a white scarf, emblazoned with a question mark.

The perpetrator of the crime... a young woman... makes her presence known to Spider-Man.

The woman possesses strange and undefined powers. She arrives unannounced on the rooftop above the apartment of Spider-Man's alter ego, Peter Parker.

After a brief encounter, she leads Spider Man across the city and directly to the AGK building, where she has left a tantalizing clue to her intentions.

Her calling card... the question mark symbol... seems to represent more than a question.

It seems to be some kind of message.

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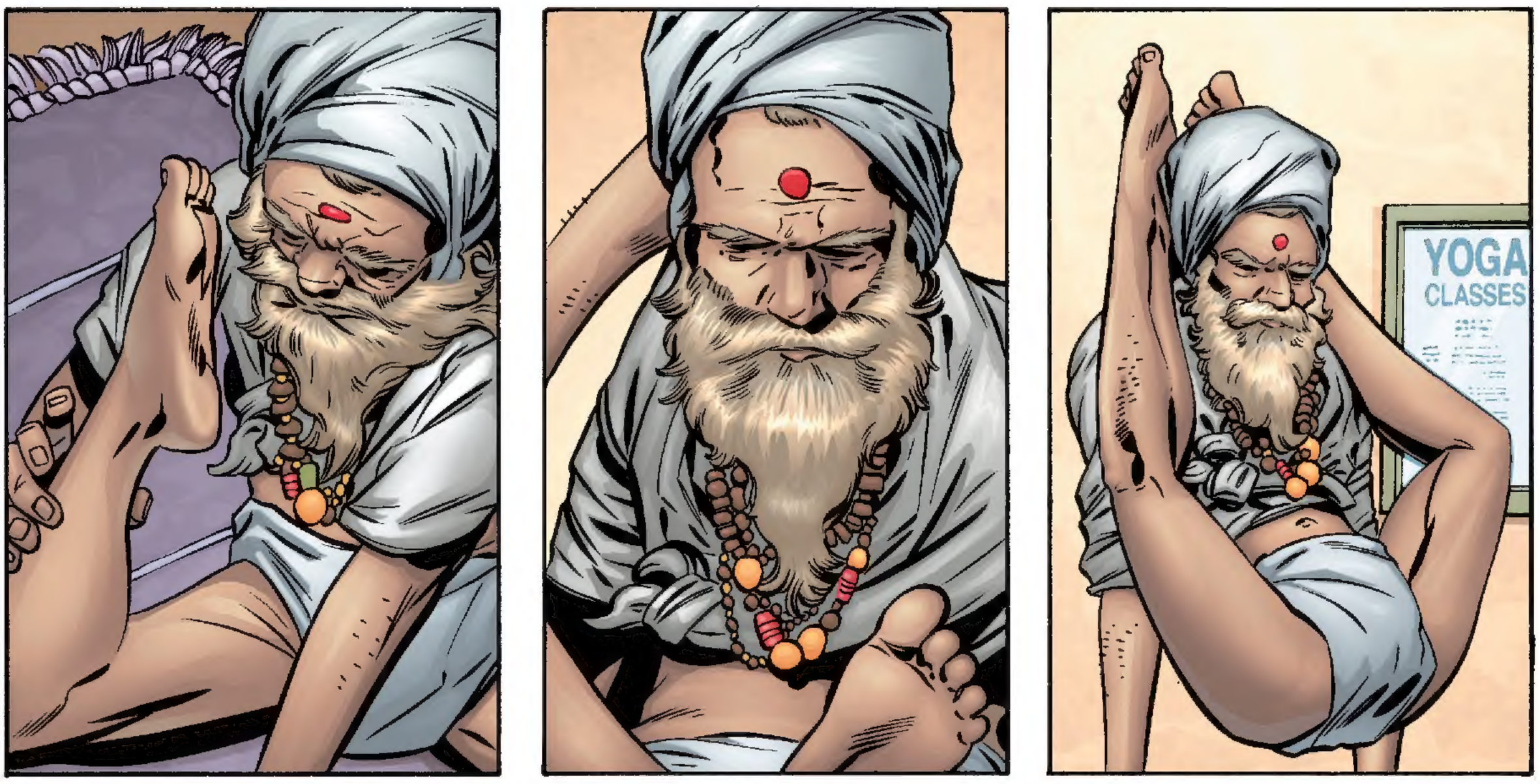

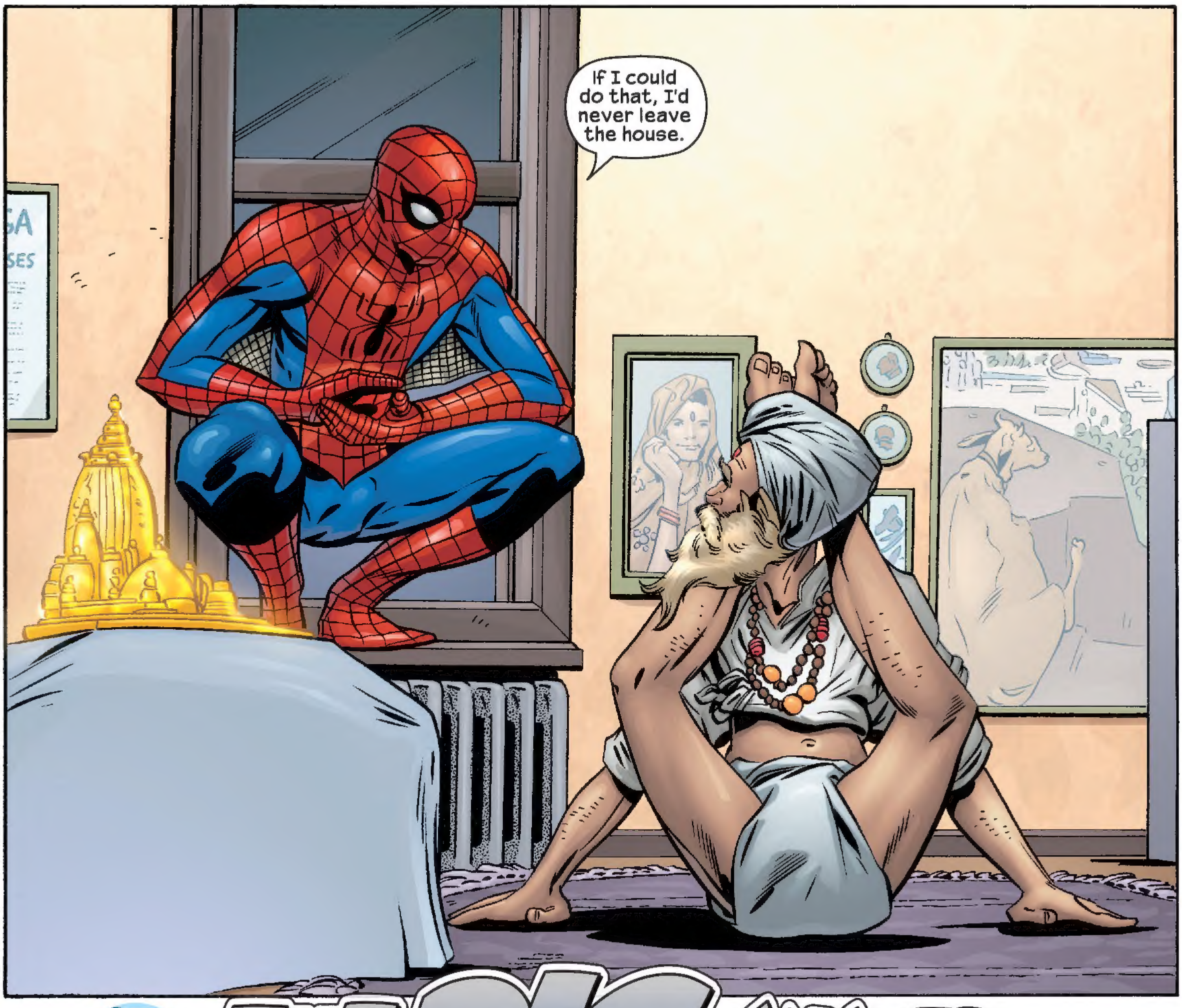

Stan Lee Presents

THE BIG ANSWER

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This is an unexpected honor, Spider-Man. Your exploits are spoken of even in my country...

Uh-huh. Foreign chicks ***dig*** me.

Indeed. And to what do I owe this considerable blessing... ~mff~ ...have you decided to pursue yoga classes in your spare time?

Sorry, Mister Singh-- I leave stretching to rubber bands and newspaper editorials. As a matter of fact, I wanted to talk about ***you***.

According to any one of about fifty internet sites I read last night, you were an activist for justice in the ***Malpura*** case years ago. Your village was poisoned by a chemical leak from an American company called AGK.

It is true that I have long sought justice in that affair. Such dissidence has made me an outcast of my own government, I am sad to say.

Yeah, well... you organized a protest at the United Nations that resulted in millions of dollars paid in compensation. But for some reason, you're still after AGK.

Which means whatever happened in Malpura was a lot worse than anyone was willing to admit.

In acting terms, that would be your cue.

My meditations bring me into harmony with my surroundings, and I choose to *forget*. Peace is not easily obtained in the face of such dark memories.

It was a typically humid day, as I recall...

ART OF INDIA

YOGA CLASSES

"...my brothers and I had come to market in order to negotiate the purchase of a goat for our grandfather.

"I remember hearing a distant siren, coming from the direction of the factories on the hill. I assumed this meant a changing of work shifts.

"The poisoning of Malpura was as sudden as it was unexpected... a pall of thick, black fog came upon the village, coating us in a dark, sticky substance that seared the eyes and lungs and clung to the skin like burning oil.

"Through this choking fog, I could hear noises. Screaming, shooting... a voice barking orders. I noticed my brother, Pindar, clutching at his throat.

"Then, all was black."

Four thousand people died, Spider-Man. I was one of the few survivors.

One of the *unlucky* ones.

I don't suppose you have any idea what this silk scarf represents, do you?

This... this artifact-- how did you come across it?

I had kind of a, uh... a *visitation*. Some chick dressed in funky foreign gear.

She said something about "red and yellow," and then she bolted before I could escort her back to the rubber room.

YOGA CLASSES

She is *here*. She is among us.

Who is?

My dear Spider-Man, you have been visited by a *goddess*.

"The goddess Tara--a most beloved of Buddhist deities. In legend, she was a mortal born from a lotus flower. She is a servant of Truth who vows to enlighten mankind.

"Tara appears in many forms, dressed in many colors, each of which carries significance. In her white form, she is the mother of all Buddhas, the embodiment of compassion.

"But imagine her duty to a tiny poisoned village, so far away. As Green Tara, she stands as a protector of the land..."

...yet her message to you is that she requires *vengeance.*

Vengeance, huh? And I'm guessing AGK Incorporated is first up against the wall...

YOGA

You are blessed, Spider-Man. The goddess asks your aid in our deliverance.

Very poetic. Am I right in assuming your goddess wears red and yellow when she's out to bust somebody's *head?*

Yes. Tara seeks revenge against those who infected Malpura.

Go. She will call on you when the time is right and show you the way.

Mister Kirkland, I have a young lady on line four. She's very insistent-- she says it's in reference to a silk scarf...

What? Put her through.

Who is this? What?

Yes, yes... I understand. No, I can't talk. I'm busy at the moment.

Can't we discuss this after work... dear? Yes... yes, that's right-- in my office. About *six*?

I'll see you then.

Jeez, you looked like you just stepped in front of a bus, Mister Kirkland. Little woman giving you trouble, huh?

No, no... uh...

...wrong *number*.

It's not often you find yourself swinging aimlessly around the city waiting for a major Buddhist deity to buzz you on your psychic cell phone.

You figure the Gods must have this really enormous copy of the Yellow Pages which they open at random whenever they get bored or *needy*.

My listing is no doubt in the well-worn section under "Bleeding Heart." That's the only explanation for why I'm such a favorite target of the metaphysical brigade.

Either that, or some Bangladeshi ultra-chick with great taste in super heroes has found a new and very meaningful way to pass the time.

As a matter of fact, I'm just about to head home and file this episode under "stalker" (albeit a very attractive one)...

...and *that's* when I'm shown the way.

So, um... I understand you were involved in the, uh... accident in Malpura, Miss...?

Um. As you know, AGK has paid millions in restitution to your people...

Not enough, Mister Kirkland. Not for the families of those who died. Not for the land you destroyed.

Not for those of us who live with the disease you thrust upon us, and which you subsequently denied even *existed*.

Then what can I *do?* I can't live with this stain on my soul-- how can I make this go away?

Four thousand people died. You paid nine million dollars, thinking that such a pitiful amount would represent a fortune in such a poor country.

For the diamond that I liberated... merely a tax write-off for your company... another fifty million dollars.

We're not interested.

SUPER-SOCCY 3000

Corman, what the devil are you doing...

Shut *up*, Kirkland! For once in your miserable life just can it, okay?

I should have known. You said you would come unarmed.

I said no guns. This is just a water pistol.

It happens to contain a watered down version of the control virus. It can't escape the plastic in this state-- that's the way it was designed to work.

It would kill you in an instant because you're already contaminated.

SUPER-SOAKY 3000

Now I have no idea what you want, lady, but I'm pretty certain you want to live.

I want no part of this--

Better think twice about that, Boss. I got twenty surveillance tapes that make you a part of it whether you like it or not. So be a good little CEO and *zip* it, huh?

Look, we're in this up to our eyeballs... or did you conveniently forget the part where we accepted a payoff from the good old C.I of A?

A hundred million dollars for an undetectable, intelligent metal nano-virus released into a non-threatening environment...

CCTV

An intelligent metal? This virus was no accident. You *tested* it on us.

It worked, didn't it?

=Uhf...!=

TALLY HO!

Okay... these guys are mean, you're a goddess and I'm *late*. Did I forget anything...?

Get down!

Uhh... not being funny, or anything... but I hardly think this is the time or *place*...

Nn-aah!

I hear a sound.

It's like an inferno, raging through a forest of four thousand burning trees. And every tree is *screaming.*

And I'm one of the trees, linked to the others by a thick, black oil that eats into flesh and lives as a single mind.

It's an intelligent metal virus, commissioned by a far-away government and designed to enhance latent human/mutant tendencies for application in military conflicts. I know all of this because my spider-senses are attuned to the consciousness of the men who designed the virus.

The virus is a conduit to Tara. I feel her breath on my cheek through the mask, her heart, beating.

I'm captivated by a goddess.

We must go after him. *Help* me.

Oh, my word--

Stay *there.*

You're crazy! Get back, you hear me?

I'll drench you in this stuff-- I *swear!*

RESEARCH LAB

NO UNAUTHORIZED PERSONNEL

Suit yourself, super-chick.

THWIP

Lucky shot. You owe me three wishes.

Don't come any closer, Spider-Man-- I'm *warning* you!

You an' that psycho-bat better get outta here, 'cause I'm *sure* you don't want to find out how much this stuff really hurts...

?

?

?

Hey, you hear what I'm *sayin'* to you? This ain't no *joke!*

It was *never* a joke, Mister Corman. Now, you must come with me or...

Or what? You'll report me to the authorities?

In case you forgot, the nano-virus was *their* idea.

I'll give you this-- you got a lot of chutzpa, lady. Anyone else came in contact with this stuff, they'd have run a mile in the other direction by now.

Don't you get it? This was never about accidents-- it wasn't even about money. This was about testing, an' you're just the little rat that gave us the right *feedback.*

Once I get this back to my handlers, I'm gonna...

--huh?

What... are you crazy?

?

Yes.

SUPER SOGGY 3000

N-no! Get away from me--

Get back...!

AAH!

?

KRASH!

Nn-ahh! Oh, God... it burns!

Please... you gotta help me...

The virus... ≠hkk≠ ...it's eating me alive...

I don't... ≠hkk≠... I don't wanna...

I do. I...

I am.

The Virus.

Don't lie to yourself, Spider-Man. Don't think this will be forgotten. Remember--

...we are a part of each other.

Wow. Clean-up on floors six, seven and eight.

I said, "clean-up on fl..."

...oh.

You probably think you've accomplished something, Spider-Man, but you've done *nothing*. The men who commissioned the virus are too highly placed and too powerful to permit exposure.

I don't doubt they'll protect themselves, Kirkland-- it's you I'm worried about. See, I happen to know there are a bunch of surveillance tapes in a control room two doors down.

"Episode one: Jail Sentences of the Rich and Famous."

One of these days, I'm going to find out what my spider-senses really *are*. Like, what they're for and how they really *work*.

See, for the longest time, I've had this sneaking suspicion I'm connected to something far bigger and weirder than anything I can possibly imagine.

I think my senses are a conductor-- some kind of telephone line to persons and parts unknown. And now that I've tapped into the heart and soul of a goddess, I can hear the wires humming in the back of my mind...

...it's a sound like tinkling bells.

NEW YORK

AGK DENIES LINK TO CIA IN POISON GAS LEAK

Tch... would you look at that. Some people never learn...

TV GUIDE

TV STARS

NEW YORK STA

AGK DENIES LINK TO CIA IN POISON GAS LEAK

Jonah? You know I told you never to goose me again in public...

Thank you.

MOJO

BUNTY

GIRL

BOO

TV GUIDE

DAILY

Yeah. Hey, you know what? I got about a million questions--

A million questions and no one to answer them... very *tantric*. There's nothing here but a lotus flower.

And that *sound* again, like tinkling bells. Like laughter coming from far away across the white snow.

Only I think I just worked out what that sound *is*:

It's the sound of four thousand people, laughing.

TIME

MOJO

BUNTY

SPORT

DAILY

END.